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THE COUNTY FREE LIBRARY SERVICE AS OPERATED AT RIVERSIDE

By JOSEPH F. DANIELS, *Librarian, Riverside (Cal.) Public Library*

The California county free library law provides that instead of establishing a separate county free library, the supervisors (county board) may contract with any existing public library within the county, whereby that public library assumes the functions of a county free library. The Riverside Public Library has such a contract.

The city of Riverside has a population of 20,000 and an assessed valuation of about \$10,000,000. It covers 46 square miles.

The county is just about the area and dimensions of Massachusetts—a little less than 8,000 square miles; population 45,000, assessed valuation \$30,000,000. We operate in 70 branches and stations and under a variety of conditions, but always adapted first and last to local autonomy and strict economy.

Roughly there are two kinds of service, general public and schools.

The general public is served at about 35 places (called branches and stations) operated through nine public libraries and several neighborhood branches supported by their communities. We have absolutely nothing to do with their management, except as we may give advice and exercise technical prestige, but we supply those nine public libraries and the branches with books and in many of them we own all the books. Sometimes several of these libraries have each a thousand books of ours and they order them and return them pretty much at will. We urge them to turn back dead stock and to keep their shelves alive by frequent orders from the main library containing 70,000 volumes. There is no fixed time for return, there are no boxes, no graded collections and no system of exchange that will keep any collection an intact unit. We pay transportation both ways and use parcel post and express.

We began the service through the exist-

ing public libraries, and while we have developed an elaborate record system we have not changed the method of distribution and of shipping. The whole plan is based on the idea of giving them what they ask for as well as we can. We supply them with order forms, envelopes and postage and expect them to mail orders to us at any time. When we want a book returned for use elsewhere we write a form post card asking for the book or a good reason. We buy duplicates, of course, but only when actual service demands warrant the purchase.

The larger number of public branches are outside incorporated cities and are located in all sorts of convenient places out in the country. There is actually no money expenditure for maintenance in any of these country branches. The voluntary custodian costs nothing and there is no real service expense at the branch. We bring the service to their doors and they do the rest. In some places we suspend for a year or two because we find no person willing to act as custodian. We believe it best to have each community do its share in the service rather than the other plan of paying custodians and paying rent, light, heat and incidentals from county funds.

School libraries are operated under contracts with elementary school districts and high school districts.

In the elementary school there is a school library fund; under contract we get the whole fund and supply general library service and supplementary readers. The state system of free textbooks has its own field and we have nothing to do with that. We do not know at this time just how far we may have to go in the supply of apparatus, maps, globes, charts, lanterns and slides, music discs and many inventions and devices of the schoolroom. Every session of the legislature shows some attempt

to define the money in the school library fund or its use. We do not know what is next in school service.

The high schools and their junior colleges do not have fixed library funds like those of the elementary school, so we make contracts with them for any sum agreed upon. With the high schools we are likewise going through an attempt to define service. In the grammar, or elementary school, the question of apparatus is confused with book service, but in the high schools it is pretty well understood that our service is a book service exclusively. We may have to add apparatus service, but it will be clearly defined and paid for.

There is, however, a difficulty in high school service concerning expensive reference books growing out of a recent list of the reference books for a high school library. The list costs about \$1,000 and, of course, cannot be furnished in contracts that pay from \$50 to \$400 a year. The solution offered is an assessment outside the contract, say about \$300 each year for three years from the school, in excess of the contract. The plan has the endorsement of several authorities but there is no legal authority for it at present and we do not know what will come.

In Riverside County there are 89 elementary school districts and we have contracts with 23. In addition we have contracts with four high schools including one junior college and our total number of school-houses is 35.

Our contract income is about \$6,900, of which \$5,000 is from the county and \$1,900 from schools.

Our total income is, approximately:

City.	\$13,000
Contracts, county and schools..	6,900
Library school	2,200
Other collections	1,000

\$23,100

The activities of our institution are four: City, county, library school, extension work.

Under the plan of combined budgets, and

with the four functions, the library has grown and prospered. It is a co-operation plan that works very well and should make a record for usefulness at a very low cost. However, this plan has the danger due to several governing bodies having more or less to do with our existence.

Two items in county free library service show some variation from normal public library service. The first is book selection. When this free service is brought to the door of a community there is an implied invitation to ask for any book wanted. Nearly ninety per cent of our county free library book purchases are direct responses to definite requests from branches and some of them must be more closely studied for better results. That is where real extension work should begin.

Then we have as the second abnormal item, the wear and tear resulting in large withdrawals and large bills for rebinding, on account of great reluctance to return books when they should be rebound. Our present method is to examine all books when we visit branches and to write frequent letters about the return of books that need repair.

The topography of the county ranges from 128 ft. below sea level to 10,000 above and you can readily understand the agricultural and scientific range of requests coming to the library.

Fortunately we began years ago to make a great collection in agriculture and horticulture—a library about something in particular—and now that the country is “doing its bit” by growing things, we are all ready with the information that will make us all richer and what is better still, it will make us all healthier and happier.

To the men in the magnesite mine and to prospectors who drift into Palm Springs and other desert places we furnish books not to be returned—withdrawn books and bales of magazines. Even the Indians get the service and many of them who have been students at Sherman Institute have the book habit.

We have hundreds of miles of cement

and macadam highways, but the real experiences are at the end of the rough roads in the deserts and in the mountains.

The system of county free libraries does what it set out to do in California and

elsewhere, it brings to the remote reader nearly everything he wishes to read a little more quickly and at less unit cost than a traveling library or any other invention in book service.

A PROGRAM FOR LIBRARY ADVERTISING

BY CARL HUNT, *Editor of Associated Advertising, Indianapolis*

I do not think advertising is a panacea, that it will cure all the ills of the library, that it will make good librarians out of bad librarians. Of itself, it cannot, of course, accomplish any such result, although it may have that tendency. But I do think advertising and library work, which, after all, seek pretty much the same thing, can combine their efforts toward the promotion of civilization, and I hope that the American Library Association and the organization which I represent, the Associated Advertising Clubs of the World, may find themselves joining in fact as well as in spirit.

The organization which I represent is greatly interested in library work. A great deal of our work touches and dovetails with yours. It has been the experience of our Association—and I have no doubt that some of the librarians here have had the advantage of co-operation from local advertising clubs—that the local advertising club, in every case where it has been called upon, is more than glad to co-operate in library advertising. And I may say for the Associated Advertising Clubs as a whole, having some 16,000 members, that we are interested in you and we would like to do what we can to help you.

I should like to mention, parenthetically, a thought which has come to me, representing to my mind the biggest opportunity which library work has in connection with advertising. I think we will wake up some day to see that there is running in this country a great national advertising campaign to advertise the service of the public library. I think we will find that some

Andrew Carnegie has discovered that it is not all-sufficient to have a beautiful library building and books and equipment; that it is quite as essential and quite as great a thing to educate the public to desire library service. We in the advertising business know that markets are in human minds. Markets can quickly be made through what we may term, in a general way, salesmanship. Markets may be made through advertising; and a desire for library service may be made through advertising. So, I am in hope that the time will come when some person with a philanthropic motive will supply the wherewithal to establish and carry forward a great national advertising campaign to put the library where it belongs, as the Great University of the Masses.

There is one answer that seems to come to the mind of the average librarian when you say advertising would be good for his library. It is: "Yes, perhaps it would be a good thing, but we seem to be pretty busy as it is, and we are using all the money available now. How could we possibly advertise? What would we do with the people when they come? Hadn't we better first get more money?"

That seems a problem, and yet advertising, or any force which would increase the efficiency of the library would naturally bring more money to the library; and if I were a librarian, I don't believe I would worry very much about my library board and what it thought if I was quite sure I had the public with me.

The way to get the public with you is to serve the public. Advertising does not get